

An Untitled Love Story

by Scatterheart

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Summary: Sarah/Jareth. After a very depressed Sarah tries to commit suicide, she falls into the Labyrinth again and meets Jareth, and they have to work together *gasp* to defeat someone who is trying to control the kingdom. *tissue warning at the end!*

1. First Part

STARTED: March 25, 2000

Here it is, folks, my first Labyrinth fanfic! Part One. (My first fanfic ever!) Enjoy, enjoy... e-mails at 2shy@teenagewildlife.com. Constructive criticism, death threats, and *gasp, can it be?* praise? will be accepted and cherished for the rest of my life. Feel free to archive this anywhere as long as this little blurb stays with the story.

> Category: Labyrinth, Romance, Adventure, Mystery Rated: PG-13 for angst, language, and some "dramatic" stuff.
 Summary: Sarah falls into the Labyrinth against her will, and Jareth has been overthrown. What is going on here???

> Disclaimer: Jareth's not mine (oh, damn), Sarah's not mine. The songs don't belong to me. If you want to sue me, go ahead. It's not like you'll get anything except maybe my goldfish.
 Story dedicated to all of my friends who helped my greatly with my plot and helped me stay sane through it all. Kristy, Esther, Dawn, Denise, anybody else I missed... Thanks a bunch.

****An Untitled Love Story Part One****

****PROLOGUE****

Nobody said it was going to be easy

> Nobody gives you guarantees
 Because a heart can always be broken

> And there can be no loving without tears
 Run away to a place where nobody knows

> Run away gotta let this feeling go
 Run away if I can't find

love

> I'm gonna run away
 Nobody's looking for perfection

> How could they give it in return?
 But I told my heart to believe you

> And you just gave your love to anyone
 Run away to a place where nobody knows

> Run away gotta let this feeling go
 Run away and I don't want to hurt anyone

> Though my heart is always searching
 If I can't find love, I'm gonna run away

> (Cher) <p>

****CHAPTER ONE****

When I was little, I used to call the house on the end of Madison and Kearny the "ghost house". It had been there for as long as I remembered, a broken down, unfinished two story building that always looked as if it was going to fall down any moment. And it was not until I was eight that my mother told me that the house had been started around ten years ago, but some workmen inside had died from falling timbers, so they abandoned the project shortly before I was born. The story was not to scare me, merely to inform me of what really happened. That was what I loved about my mother. She didn't scare or use lies to persuade me into doing anything, and she had told me to believe anything that I wanted to.

> So when my mother, the person who I was planning to spend the rest of my life with, walked out on me, I didn't know what to believe. I was shattered, confused, and I told myself that she would return soon. But it was a whole three years later before another woman walked into our family. She wasn't my mother, but another person I had never seen before. And without giving me any chance to talk, you married her. Soon, little Toby came into my life, and not long after, the news of my mother dying in a car crash with her boyfriend. All these unwanted presents you have given me! I don't want them, and I am full and sick of them. Nobody tells me to believe what I want anymore, and the truth in my life is gone. For three years I have lived like this, but I can't stand it, really I can't. So I'm going to move on. Not to another new apartment, or a new state. I have an apartment half a city away from where I used to live, but you are still holding me back. I'm going to move on to where nobody can follow me, and where I will be free at last.
 ~ Sarah.

She took the handwritten letter in her trembling hands, read it over once or twice.

> Probably the best thing I've written before.

> Sarah wiped the tears away from her eyes, and folded the letter. It was dark inside the "ghost house", and her flashlight that had been placed on a disintegrating table was beginning to flicker.
 It had to be now.

> She put the note into her jacket pocket, and grabbed the thick coil of rope next to the flashlight.
 Why wasn't she nervous?

> She felt strangely detached, as if she was looking out of somebody else's eyes. It was as if somebody else was doing it, somebody else climbing onto the table and wrapping and knotting the rope tightly around an overhead beam.
 _I can't believe myself. _

> Sarah pulled on the rope once or twice. It was firmly in place, and the noose that hung over the edge was the perfect shape and size.

 Sarah grabbed the noose and sighed loudly. This was it, there was no turning back. All that she meant to say was written in the note, and the note was safely tucked away in her pocket where it

would be found as soon as they found her.

> Basically, the message is that I can't stand my crummy life.

> She wondered if it had to take this much to convince her stepmother and father to listen to her. It was too late to change her mind now, she had decided on this for weeks. She automatically looped the noose around her neck, and felt the rope scratch against her skin. She placed her feet at the edge of the table, and prepared to jump.
 It was going to be over in such a short time. She had read about hangings in books, and none of them lasted over ten minutes. Besides, she had suffered much more pain in her life. The pain of her mother dying, the pain her stepmother had caused. All this was going to be over so soon. If she was lucky, her neck would break and she wouldn't even have to endure ten minutes.

> Sarah clenched her hands, closed her eyes.
 She bent her knees, feeling the rope tense around her throat. She was going to count to three. Then she was going to-

> No. Sarah couldn't bring herself to do it. She found that she was trembling, crying, hyperventilating. No. She wasn't going jump now, she couldn't. She opened her eyes, took a step back from the edge of the table, and took a shuddering sigh.
 And it was then, without warning, that the tabletop crushed under her with a crisp snap. Sarah's scream was cut short by the vicious yank of the rope around her neck as she fell.

> No!!! No!!

> This was it, it was over. The irony of it all. She could feel a numbing pain at her throat, and she couldn't breathe or move and she knew was going to die.
 Help me somebody! Help!

> She instantly didn't want to die, not now. The sound of her heart pounded in her ears, and through the red haze she was in, she thought she heard a distant cracking noise from overhead.
 But it didn't matter anymore. She was dying. And strangely, it didn't feel too bad. Why, it almost felt as if she was... falling.

****CHAPTER TWO****

Sarah had always thought the dead couldn't feel pain, but she knew that she was wrong. Her neck hurt like hell. She was probably in Hell right now, from the feeling of it. It was hot and humid, and she was on some sort of hard surface.

> Sarah opened her eyes. And gasped.
 She was inside a room.

> Did she-?
 Was she-?

> No. She was alive, and she was surprisingly fine.
 Sarah's hand flew to her neck and touched her throat. She felt a painful welt that stretched from her left jaw to her right. So she did try to hang herself after all. It almost seemed as if the night in the "ghost house" was a nightmare.

> Never again. Never am I ever, ever going to get any more suicidal thoughts.
 Sarah dusted herself off and stood to her feet. She was in some sort of stone room, sparsely furnished with a simple table and chair. The one window carved into the wall showed that it was nearly completely dark outside. The rope, the "ghost house", even the damn flashlight was gone.

> Sarah took the note out of her pocket, ripped it up, and scattered the pieces over the stone ground.
 One thing that I don't need.

> She noticed a wooden door that was slightly ajar on the far side of the room, and walked over to it. She opened it, the rusty hinges creaking. Outside was a stone hallway, with flaming torches lighting along the walls. It looked strangely familiar, where had she seen

this place before? Sarah walked into the hallway, following the rows of torches. Her tennis shoes padded softly along the polished stone floor. Wherever this was, she must have fallen here. This was probably an underground room or something.
 Underground.

> Sarah stopped walking as a thought hit her head. Labyrinth. She was inside the castle of the Labyrinth. The memories suddenly flooded back into her, as the familiarity of her surroundings dawned upon her.
 But Jareth, the king, had been turned into an owl. _Then why is this place so well tended?_

> Sarah found herself breaking into a run down the hall. Somebody lived inside this castle, and it most certainly was Jareth. Maybe he was the one who brought her down here, even saved her.
 The hall took a left turn, and Sarah could begin to hear noisy shouting and cackling at the end of the passageway. It had to be the goblins. She was nearing the throne room of the castle, where those goblins gathered every day.

> As the circular throne room came into view, Sarah slowed down her running. About a hundred or so goblins were frolicking about, drunken and stupid. Sarah hid by the edge of the hall, hoping that she hadn't been seen. Even if she had, the goblins were probably too drunk and wrapped up in their foolishness to notice, anyway. Her eyes scanned the room for any sign of Jareth.
 And then she saw the simple gray throne toward the side of the throne room, standing out regally above the mass of teeming goblins. Somebody was sitting in it.

> For a moment Sarah was confused. Was it Jareth? Jareth didn't look like that. No, it wasn't Jareth, it was a female, a girl by the looks of it. She sat upon the large throne, clad in a beige colored silk dress that billowed softly when she moved.
 Sarah edged closer to the room, hoping to get a glimpse of her face, and deciding whether she should introduce herself to the stranger. She might be Jareth's wife or daughter. But either of the two choices seemed unlikely, since the girl looked no bigger than a schoolgirl, and she had heavy black tresses that bore no resemblance to Jareth's wispy blond hair.

> And she did not look like she belonged in a throne room surrounded by rambunctious little goblins at all. No, there was something about her, something totally out of place about her that sent question marks reeling inside Sarah's head.
 She could be dangerous. Sarah gasped at her own sudden thought, feeling an unexpected coldness in her stomach.

> She hadn't yet asked herself how this girl had gotten here, in Jareth's throne.
 And where is Jareth anyway?

> Sarah instinctively took a few steps back. It was safe just to stay here for a while, to see what the girl (or whatever she was) was up to before presenting herself.
 Almost immediately she got her answer as one drunken goblin holding a goblet of dark wine wandered too close to her and spilled the maroon colored liquid onto her dress.

> The girl lashed out with her hand and grabbed the squealing goblin by the neck before Sarah had time to blink.
 And then as she watched, growing more horrified by the second, the girl squeezed the goblin's throat until the harsh cracking of bone reached Sarah's ears.

> The noise in the throne room had fallen deathly quiet.
 "This is what you get for ruining my dress, do you hear me?" The girl shrieked to the huddled and frightened goblins. She flung the body roughly to the ground beside her. "Now clean this filth away from me."

> Sarah didn't care for seeing the girl's face anymore. She suppressed a scream that threatened to escape her lips and stumbled

blindly backwards, back into the hallway. But her worn out tennis shoes slipped on the polished stones paving the ground, sending her feet into the air. She tried to regain her balance... too late. She reached out with a hand to stop her fall but her arm twisted under her... and she landed violently upon her wrist.
 It felt as if her hand had been snapped away from her body. Sarah gritted her teeth, did not dare herself to whimper, as she slowly lifted herself from the ground. The piercing pain in her wrist vibrated up and down her arm and hands. It had been sprained, obviously.

> "Well! What do we have here?"
 Sarah lifted her eyes in alarm. And choked on a gasp. Because the girl in the beige colored dress had discovered her and was now standing in front of her. She was beautiful. No human girl can look that beautiful. Her skin was milky pale and smooth, without a blemish, and her green eyes glittered like emeralds. A beautiful silver crescent moon design had been carefully drawn on her forehead, and a strand of black hair fell across her face, caressing her delicate lips and dainty chin.

> She raised a slim eyebrow at Sarah. "Hmm? Who are you?" she asked curtly, her voice sounding like icicles shattering on a frozen river.
 Sarah stuttered, didn't know what to answer as she stood in front of the girl, clutching her hurt wrist. Next to her she felt like a sack of potatoes, heavy and clumsy.

> The girl looked up at Sarah expectantly, and held her hands to her narrow waist. She was not even grazing five feet tall, yet she did not seem the least bit childish. In fact, her eyes were cruel and contempt, radiating ancient evils.
 No, Sarah decided. She can't be a just normal girl.

> "I, uh-"
 "Never mind." The girl snapped her fingers once, and immediately five or six goblins in full battle armor appeared behind her. "Take this girl," she commanded coldly, "and kill her."

> Without a word the goblins crowded around Sarah, and seized her roughly by her arms and legs. A fresh jolt of pain came from her wrist as a goblin snatched it in his gnarled hands. But she barely noticed the hurt as she tried to comprehend what the girl had just ordered the goblins to do.
 Kill her.

> "Wait! No!" Sarah struggled against the tight grip of the goblins. "Look, you don't understand, I didn't want to come here!"
 "Take her away to the dungeon and kill her." The girl motioned to the goblins. "She knows that commoners like herself can't come inside the castle."

> "Listen to me!" Sarah protested as the goblins began to tug her toward the direction of the dungeons. "I'm not a commoner and I didn't want to come here in the first place. I fell through a crack in the ground and I ended up here!"
 The girl suddenly jerked as if she'd been shot. "What did you say?" she whispered, gazing at Sarah with feverish green eyes.

> "I- I fell here. I can't explain it, I was inside this old beat up house and I fell through the ground and-"
 "Shut up!" The girl screamed, but this time she was grinning. "You're a human aren't you? You're a human! You're a human!"

> "I'm-"
 "Aha!"

> What was going on? The girl seemed to have undergone a complete transformation in the matter of seconds.
 "Well, human. I should have known from the moment I saw you. Oh, Goddess, look at you!" The girl jeered at Sarah, an impish smile playing on her lips as she quickly studied Sarah up and down. "Well, never mind. I'll still have to keep you in the dungeon before I decide what I should do with you. Guards? Take this human to the dungeon, and don't you dare kill her."

> With that, the army wordlessly yanked Sarah after them as they

continued on their way to the dungeon.
 Sarah bit her lip, trying to block out the terrible pain in her wrist, and trying to understand what had just happened. At least she was going to live... for now anyway.

> The last thing she heard the girl say before she was led out of sight was, "Don't worry, human, you'll have some company!"
<p>

****CHAPTER THREE****

She was thrown brutally inside the dungeon, onto the damp and muddy ground. Her wrist felt ready to explode as it came into contact with the dirt, and she moaned in agony.

> The iron door behind her creaked and slammed shut, the sound echoing in the silence. She turned her head around, but the goblins were gone. She was all alone.
 The dungeon was dark, and a torch the size of a candle flickered wildly on the wall. Water dripped from the ceiling, threatening to put out the precious light and to leave her in total blackness.

> Sarah felt unwanted tears come to her eyes as she struggled to a sitting position on the dirt ground. She was better off dead, she really was. Wasn't that the reason she walked to the abandoned house in the first place? To hang herself. After all, her mother had died. Her father didn't care about her, and there was no question that her stepmother had no feeling for her.
 And Toby? Toby was a sweet boy at times, but he was only four years old, and he didn't offer much comfort to her.

> She had wondered sometimes what would have happened if she had stayed in the Labyrinth three years ago. What if she had taken Jareth's offer? What if she had feared him, loved him, and did what he said? What if Jareth-
 Jareth.

> She realized that she hadn't really thought of him in such a long time, weeks and weeks, maybe months.
 Well...

> No, that wasn't exactly true. You couldn't forget a person like Jareth, no matter how hard you tried. Jareth was always there in a special place in the back of her mind. And sometimes in her dreams, she would find his intense eyes staring into hers...
 Oh, honestly, Sarah, just stop. You wanted to stay in the Labyrinth? Well, here you are, back inside the Labyrinth again.

> Sarah laughed bitterly to herself. Life could be so ironic and sarcastic to her. Almost always she would-
 Somebody coughed, and Sarah nearly jumped out of her skin.

> "Who's there?" Her heart speeded in her chest as she turned her head to the sound. She remembered the girl saying to her as she got led to the dungeon, "You'll have some company!"
 She forgot to mention who... or what was company.

> "Hello?" She called again, her voice wavering. "Who are you?"
 "Who are you?" The voice coming from the shadows was thick, raspy, but Sarah had no trouble identifying it after three years.

> "Jareth?"
 There was a pause. Then, "We meet again, Sarah."

> Sarah felt the corners of her mouth lift into a smile as a wave of relief washed over her. She scrambled up and headed over to his direction.
 As the weak light shone down on his sitting figure, Sarah couldn't help but gasp. He looked dreadful. His face had an angry red slash extending from his ear to the bottom of his chin, and blood matted his hair. His shirt was ripped in too many places to count, and Sarah could see the blood on his bare chest.

> It took Sarah a few tries to get the words out. "What happened?"

 The light had passed over Jareth's face, and all she could see

was his dark silhouette again.

> "Aberanne." He spat the word out.
 Aberanne. "That's her name? It's her, right? The girl in your throne room? That's her?"

> Jareth chuckled softly. "She's not a girl, Sarah. She's a wyan. She's over eight thousand years old."
 A wyan, so that's what she was... whatever a wyan was. She knew Aberanne couldn't be human. She was just a bit too small, her skin was too pale, and her eyes were too big.

> Sarah sat down beside him and rested her back against the wall.

 "What did she do, Jareth?"

> "She wanted control over my kingdom. I didn't let her. So we had a war. Her army of other wyans against my army of goblins."
 "She defeated you?" Sarah bit her tongue as soon as the words were out of her mouth. _Not the right thing to say._

> Jareth exhaled. "Wyans are more powerful than humans. They're many times stronger, a bit smarter. Yes, she defeated me. She-" Jareth stopped, as if searching for the right words to say.
 "What did she do?"

> "She had the most wonderful plan of defeating me," he said at last in a voice dripping with sarcasm.
 "Yes?"

> "She had her army seduce my army and had them turn against me," he said. Sarah stared at him, even though she all she could see was a blob of his outline.
 "She did what?"

> "You are laughing at me."
 "No I'm not. She what?"

> "She seduced my army," he said dispassionately, as if delivering a history session to a class of sleepy freshmen. "Wyans are known for their powers of seduction. They are unnaturally beautiful to other species. Humans, goblins, elves, gnomes, even vampires feel attracted to a wyan." He shook his head. "My army was pathetic. They never resisted to Aberanne's army at all."
 Sarah didn't know what to say. She stayed quiet, but a single question burned inside her head.

> "Sarah, I know what you're going to ask me. Go ahead."

"Well..." Sometimes she could swear he read minds. "How did you not get...?" Her voice trailed off. "You know, 'seduced'?"

> "You see, other wyans aren't unnaturally attracted to their own kind. Since I am half wyan, Aberanne has not affected me."
 "Oh." Sarah's heart skipped a beat. So that explained him. There had always been that something about him that was not quite human. His was so ethereal, his mismatched eyes and enigmatic smile unlike anything Sarah had ever seen. And the way that her body reacted when...

> There you go again. Just stop it.

> Jareth laughed softly. "Naturally Aberanne tried to seduce me. But I would rather jump into the Bog of Eternal Stench than to lay a finger on her."
 "Oh."

> There was a long silence, and Sarah fidgeted uncomfortably.
 "So was your mother wyan?" She asked suddenly, breaking the tension that hung in the air.

> "No, my father was. He was the prince of the goblins at the time, and on one day he stood on the balcony of the castle that overlooked the commoner's marketplace, and he saw the most beautiful human woman he had ever seen. My mother."
 "Then what?" Sarah was intrigued. Never had she thought of Jareth's parents. In fact, she hadn't been sure that he had any parents at all.

> "She got invited to the castle to work as a servant, and as time went by, they fell in love. Married."
 "Then what?"

> "The other wyans killed her," he said without a trace of emotion. "They didn't approve of my father marrying a common human woman like my mother, least of all my grandfather. And then the humans revolted against the wyans for killing my mother, and they had a bloody war,

but the wyans won out in the end. My father and grandfather died in the midst of the war, along with the thousands of wyans and all of the humans. I was seven at that time, and I survived with some of the goblins."
 "I'm... sorry," Sarah stuttered, not knowing the right words to say. "You must have been so scared back then."

> "I don't remember. Why am I telling you all this?"
 "That was terrible, you must have been scared!"

> "It's none of your business."
 "But you just-" Sarah sighed loudly. She would never understand him.

> "I was mostly angry. I hated the humans, I hated wyans, and I hated myself.
 I- Never mind."

> "That's sad."
 "It is."

> "Yes... Ah!" Sarah cried out as she accidentally brushed him with her wrist.
 "Is anything wrong?"

> "Yes... No, everything's fine."

> "Let me see your hand."
 "Look, it's fine."

> "Let me see."
 Jareth reached out swiftly and trapped her wrist gently in his hands. "It's sprained. You said nothing was wrong."

> "I know." Sarah sulked.
 Jareth let go of her hand. "I'll see what I can do."

> "What are you-" Sarah protested.
 He ignored her, took off his shirt and ripped a couple of thick pieces from it. "Give me your wrist."

> For the second time in the hour, Sarah felt tears sting her eyes. What was the matter with her? She wanted to slap herself, to stop the roller coaster of emotions that ran through her. You've had a hell of a day, you're just tired and stressed out. She wordlessly held out her arm.
 His slim fingers were warm and comforting as they expertly wrapped the bandages around her wrist, firmly, but not too tightly. He stroked her hand once, after he was done, then gave it back to her. "Be more careful."

> "So should you, you have a cut on your face. That's to put it lightly," Sarah said, feeling the lump in her throat grow.
 "The wyans heal quickly."

> "But you're only half."
 He ignored the comment. "How did you get here?"

> "I-" Sarah hesitated. "I accidentally fell through a hole in the ground of house... and I fell in your castle."
 "You did _not_."

> Sarah blanched at his surprised tone of voice. "Why? What's so wrong?"
 "It's- Aberanne wanted to take over the kingdom for a different reason. She not only wanted the goblin kingdom... She wanted yours. She wanted to take revenge on the humans for killing off so many of her kind."

> Sarah felt a cold knot tie in her stomach.
 "Up until now only the experienced ones who knew how to travel between the worlds could do so," Jareth continued. "Aberanne is a dark witch. She had studied spellcraft for some time and she has thinned out the veil between the two worlds: yours and ours. She's obviously pierced it completely, because you fell through it. And then the gap is going to grow, and she's going to step to your world and take over your race in a matter of months."

> "No. You're joking."
 "Trust me on this one."

> "But-"
 So that was why Aberanne had been so happy when she found out Sarah was human and that she had fallen through some sort of portal from her world. "We have to stop her! I can't let her do that!"

> "It's most likely too late. Once she knows she's going to get straight to work." He sighed and lowered his head.
 "Jareth."

Please." She reached out and touched his hair with her good hand. It was surprisingly soft and silky under her fingers. "I know you won't give up. You never give up. Help me, I can't do it alone."

> Jareth lifted his head, simply looked at her.
 "Let go of our past, Jareth. If we don't work together now, both of our worlds are going to be destroyed."

> "It's going to be another war if we interfere with Aberanne. I do not want to see my kingdom destroyed and the people I love dead."

 Sarah took her hand away from his hair. What did he mean by, the people I love?

> Don't think about that now, you have more important things. "If we don't interfere, your kingdom is going to be destroyed anyway and a lot more people will die."
 For a long time he remained silent.

"All right," he whispered at last. "But now, you and I will need to get some rest. With luck, some of my power will be restored by tomorrow. Then we get out of this wretched dungeon."

> Sarah smiled broadly at him through the dark. "All right," she agreed. <p>

****CHAPTER FOUR****

> "Sarah, you'll need to wake up."
 "Can it, okay? Leave me alone."

> "Sarah." The voice was firm, and a bit amused. "It's nearly noon."
 "So what? Let me sleep..." And then as a small pulse of pain came from her wrist, Sarah remembered where she was.

> She was lying on the ground, curled up into a little ball, her head resting on something soft.
 Oh man... Jareth.

> Instantly, she scrambled to her feet, her eyes flying open and all trace of sleep vanishing.
 "Sorry, Jareth. I just..."

> She felt herself blush. Last night she had just planned on taking a little nap, but she had obviously underestimated how fatigued she was. The last thing she remembered before slipping off into a thirteen-hour slumber was lying her head down on Jareth's thigh and using it as a pillow.
 "It's all right." A brief smile flickered across his lips.

> Sarah blinked a couple of times, adjusting to the bright light. Sunlight was streaming through a small barred window above her head. She hadn't noticed the window yesterday in the dark night.
 "Sleep well, Sarah?"

> "Yeah- Ow!" She growled. "My damn wrist."
 "Be careful with it," Jareth warned.

> Sarah nodded. Only in the daylight could she get a good look at him. He still seemed in pretty bad shape, but the gash across his face was visibly smaller, and the cuts on his naked chest were healing. But, surprisingly, he looked every bit as handsome as when Sarah had first seen him. Sarah found herself staring at his lithe body, and turned away, embarrassed.
 "So, do you think you can get us out of here?" Sarah asked, flustered.

> "I think so. My powers are back." He stood up and stretched, reminding Sarah of a white tiger.
 Even battered as he was, Jareth still managed to look beautiful. Sarah wasn't so sure about herself. She self-consciously smoothed back her hair and straightened out her rumpled clothes.

> "So, what's your idea of getting us out?" she asked.
 "Nothing much." With a dramatic flourish that Sarah was sure was unneeded, he summoned a crystal ball into his hand. "With this. Stand clear." Sarah obeyed, taking a few steps back as he flung the crystal ball with all his strength at the barred windows above them. The crystal

flew through the air, catching the sunlight and scattering rainbow colors into the dungeon cell. With a surprisingly muffled sound, it came into contact with the window bars, and exploded soundlessly. Sarah had to shield her eyes away from the short eruption of bright white light, and when she looked back, the whole upper section of rock wall had been melted cleanly away. White magic.

> "I'm impressed." She grinned. He shrugged as if it was nothing and pushed himself effortlessly up and over the wall. Sarah heard him land on the other side, and a moment later his blond head peered over the hole.
 "Do you think you can make it, or do you want me to blast away some more of the wall?"

> "Um, that's okay. I think I can make it over if you help a little," Sarah said before she knew it.
 "Of course."

> He reached through the hole and she grabbed his hand with her good one. She used her feet to climb up the section of wall as Jareth pulled her to the top.
 "Now, jump," Jareth instructed her, letting go of her hand.

> Sarah was sitting awkwardly on top of the wall, unsure of what to do. The grassy ground on the outside was rather far down, about five and a half feet. If she jumped...
 "Don't worry, I'll catch you."

> Excuse me?

> "Who's worrying?" she demanded, feigning courage. Then without thinking, she let herself jump away from the wall. And collided roughly into Jareth. He staggered for a second, then fell to the grass, Sarah on top of him.
 "Jareth-!"

> "I caught you, didn't I?" He whispered to her, smiling mysteriously.
 "In a way," she said.

> She had felt him give way to her rather quickly, and she wondered if he had fallen on purpose.
 Come on. Why would he do that?

> "Did I hurt you?"
 "No," Sarah said, and she realized neither of them had moved. She immediately clambered to her feet, feeling her face flush red, and managed a small, "I'm sorry."

> Jareth stood up, smiling, and dusted the grass pieces clinging to his shoulders.
 "I should have caught you."

> "You did."
 "No, I let you fall on me."

> "Well, that's..."
 "That's beyond the point, isn't it?"

> "What? Oh, yes."
 "Yes."

> They looked at each other.
 "So, Jareth, what do we do now?" Sarah asked. She averted her gaze to the landscape around her. They were at the foot of the castle, in a large, grassy meadow. Ahead of them was a dense forest, which spread as far as she could see.

> "What do we do?" he echoed.
 Sarah blinked. "I mean, now that you've got us out of the dungeon, don't you have a plan of where we're going?"

> "No."
 "No?"

> "No, I was sure you did. You seemed so enthusiastic about the idea of us defeating Aberanne that I was sure you had a plan."
 "A plan?" Sarah squeaked. "I don't have a plan."

> "Then what was your idea, pray tell? How shall we kill Aberanne, send you back to your world, and restore peace to the kingdom?"
 Sarah's mouth dropped open a couple of millimeters. "My idea? I... well... I figured you had an idea."

> "My idea? Aberanne is planning on killing me today. If my powers hadn't returned this morning, we would have still been inside that wretched cell." He gestured to the castle. "I hadn't been thinking of anything else, much less a battle strategy."
 "Oh. Wonderful. Very good, 'Your Highness'."

> "I saved you, Sarah. I rescued you out of the dungeon and this is

all the gratitude I receive?"
 "You rescued me out of the frying pan and into the fire. I bet Aberanne is going to scour the whole kingdom for us once she finds us missing!"

> "And staying inside a jail cell is better? Do you think that she won't kill you afterwards? She can, Sarah, and she will. You would not have a chance at living if you stayed in there."
 "I-"

> "We are working together, Sarah," he said with exaggerated patience. "Remember this. It will be no good if we bicker all day."
 "Working? I don't even trust you!"

> "You learn to trust me."

> Sarah snorted. "After poisoning me with that peach last time? After you frightened Hoggle out of his wits and forced him to give the peach to me?"
 "I was doing you a favor."

> "That was not a favor."
 "It wasn't?" Jareth asked, his voice soft.

> "You made me forget about everything else..." Sarah breathed. Their faces were centimeters apart, they had been moving closer and closer to each other without even knowing it. Jareth's green and blue eyes locked with her soft brown ones.
 "You still remembered your brother."

> "You wanted me to forget. You-" Sarah's breath caught in her throat as Jareth brought two fingers under her chin and tilted her head upwards. "You didn't want me to take my brother back."
 "Your brother holds no interest for me." Jareth blinked slowly, his eyelashes dark against his pale skin.

> "Then why did you trap me in the ballroom?"
 "Because I wanted to do this." He bent his head down, moving his mouth closer and closer to hers.

> He's going to kiss me he's going to kiss me he's going to kiss me...

> And yet Sarah made no move to turn away, to push him back. This kiss... it was inevitable. She felt herself lean closer, melting in his arms...
 "Aaaahh!!!"

> The piercing scream hit her ears and made her jump back in surprise. "What was that?"
 Jareth hissed. "It's-"

> The screaming figure of Aberanne appeared from behind the castle. "Jareth, you escaped!" She howled, her eyes burning with emerald fire. "I'll get both of you!!"
 Immediately, Jareth reacted. He grabbed Sarah by the arm and pulled her after him as he ran toward the direction of the forest.

> "Run, Sarah, as fast as you can," he said through gritted teeth.
 "Okay..." She looked frantically back at their pursuer. And she gasped. Because Aberanne was flying after them, her toes a foot above the grass and she was slicing through the air with her light beige dress flapping behind her.

> "She's going to catch up!" Sarah yelled at Jareth.
 "Keep running!"

> "I can't go any faster!"
 "Stop talking!"

> Sarah looked back at Aberanne again. She was only about twenty feet behind them, and she grinned demonically as her eyes met Sarah's.
 "You die, human!"

> Sarah knew that it was true. Jareth hadn't exaggerated when he said that the wyans were so much more powerful than humans. And he hadn't lied when he told her that they were not going to defeat her.
 She screamed. Aberanne was right on her back, and she reached out with her hands to claw at her neck.

> And Jareth gave Sarah a vicious yank, which pulled her away from Aberanne's sharp nails.
 But no, it wasn't enough. Aberanne grabbed onto Sarah's arm, and Sarah could feel herself getting pulled towards certain death...

> Then Sarah's feet suddenly couldn't touch the ground anymore as she felt herself falling with Jareth. <p>

****INTERMISSION****

As I sit with the sun falling over the hayfields by the river
> A little hand reached out and touched me and stole my heart away

 And I followed into a labyrinth of gold and rose red color
> And then I heard such beautiful voices calling out to me to go
 Floating down, floating down
> Floating down to Agenais
 And we'll go floating down, floating down
> Floating down to Agenais
 And there it was lit by a blue flame a gold and crystal palace
> And they were dancing in long silver veils and white lilies in their hair
 And we rose above in the moonlight to watch the city sleeping
> And this beautiful, magical place I no longer want to leave
 We'll go floating down, floating down
> Floating down to Agenais
 And we'll go floating down, floating down
> Floating down to Agenais
 Leaving it all behind promises of the wild
> They say come little sister, come with us
 And let's fly
> We'll go floating down, floating down
 Floating down to Agenais

> And we'll go floating down, floating down
 Floating, floating away
> And I'm floating, floating, floating, floating away...
 (Donna Lewis)

2. Second Part

**** An Untitled Love Story Part 2 ****

****CHAPTER FIVE****

Falling...
> Had they fallen through a hole in the ground? Sarah couldn't see, couldn't speak. She felt the wind rushing by her ears as she fell through the darkness. Jareth was right beside her, holding her arm. It was strangely comforting, even though Sarah knew they were going to die. Nobody can survive a fall this high.
 It's actually happening. I'm actually going to-
> Thud.
 Sarah felt herself land on a semi hard surface. "Agh..." The wind was forced out of her lungs, and she choked a few times before breathing again.
> "What happened?" She opened her eyes, which she realized had been closed, and looked around. Her bedroom. She was inside her bedroom, lying in a heap on the carpeted ground.
 "Sarah, are you there?" It was Jareth's voice from beside her.
> "Yeah. I'm okay. Everything's fine." Was it possible-?
 Sarah took a few deep breaths and sat up. For a moment she doubted it, doubted whether it was really her bedroom or not. Maybe it was just an illusion or glamour Aberanne had produced. But no, the room looked exactly as she had left it. Her diary was lying opened on the table, her teddy bear flopped on her pillow. Every last detail. Sarah broke into a grin. "I know what happened, Jareth."
> Jareth jumped to his feet, looked around the room uncertainly. "You

do? Well then, please enlighten me."
"We're in my room in my apartment. Do you know what happened? We fell through a gap in the veil of the worlds." She held up a hand to Jareth, who pulled her to her feet.

>"That's not possible. How come nothing else was sucked inside? And Aberanne? She isn't here."
Sarah smiled widely. "My only guess is that the gap only opens up for a split second before it closes again. In random places, at random times. It's all chance. Do you know how lucky we were to run into one of these gaps? And to fall into my apartment, no less. What if we fell into a supermarket or onto a road or something? That would be bad."

>"So the gap closed before Aberanne could get pulled inside?"

"Yeah, that's it. See, she has thinned out the veil between the worlds, but she doesn't know yet how to control the gaps. They keep on popping up and closing everywhere. Like when I fell through the floor in the old house. I fell into the Labyrinth, but nothing else did. The gap closed before the rope and the timbers on the roof fell through. So that means--"

>Jareth suddenly cut her off. "What have you been doing with a rope?"

Sarah blanched, her exuberance fading away like sand through a sieve. _Did I say rope? Oh damn, oh damn, oh damn..._ "Oh, it's nothing, it's..."

> "Why have you gone inside an abandoned house?"
 "It's not your business to know, okay?"

>Jareth grabbed her firmly by the shoulders. "Sarah. Tell me."

"It's nothing, can you please drop the subject?"

> "You tried to hang yourself, Sarah?" He pressed.
 "Of course not! Are you crazy?"

> "You are lucky the timbers gave way," Jareth said through his teeth.
 Sarah had never seen him angrier. His mouth was a firm line, and his eyes burned into hers.

> "I mean, what's it to you?" she asked quietly.
 "I don't want to see you dead! There is no reason you should kill yourself!" Jareth exploded.

> "Well I'm not dead! I'm right here." To her surprise she felt hot tears begin to run down her face. "That day, I was... really angry. My life was beginning to fall apart. I was too angry to think straight. But deep down, I never really wanted to kill myself. There were just all these... little things that I kept on holding on to. And in the end I decided against doing it, but the table broke from under me while I was standing there and..."
 "Don't you ever do that again," he whispered fiercely.

> "Never. Look, can we please drop the subject?"
 He sighed deeply and let her go. "Yes. We have more important things to do."

> Sarah wiped away her tears, cleared her throat. "Yes. Now we know what's happening, right? The thing with the gaps popping up everywhere."
 "Yes, Sarah."

> "Okay. Now we take care of your cuts and my wrist. I have some bandages and medicine. Hold on." She walked past Jareth and out of the room.
 The medicine cabinet was in the kitchen, and Sarah grabbed a roll of ace bandages, rubbing alcohol, and cotton swabs before returning to Jareth. He was in the living room, running one elegant hand lightly over the furniture. Sarah smiled to herself. He had obviously not seen an electric lamp or television set before.

> "Your house is beautiful, Sarah," Jareth said as he noticed her. "Such interesting decorations."
 "Thanks. This is actually an apartment, though. I have to rent it." She set the materials down on the coffee table and gestured to the sofa next her. "You can sit over

there."

> Jareth sat down, his body pale against the black leather. Sarah knelt beside him and unscrewed the cap off the alcohol bottle. She took a cotton ball and soaked it in a bit of alcohol.
 "Now this is going to sting a little. But you're a big boy aren't you?" She couldn't resist a tease.

> "Yes, I think I can handle it." He winked at her.
 "Good." Sarah leaned over and dabbled the cotton ball over the cut on his face while her heart picked up speed.

> Do you have to be so beautiful? She felt his eyes on her, drinking in her every movement.

> She moved down to clean his body, feeling his smooth skin and hard muscles. The steady rise and fall of his chest as he breathed...
 "All done," she whispered, her breath brushing over his skin.

> He stroked her hair. "Thank you. Now let me see your wrist."
 She handed him the ace bandages and held out her arm. He slowly untied the cloth around her wrist and replaced it with the bandage. When he was finished, he took her hand and slowly pressed her palm to his lips.

> "A kiss will make it better." He smiled.
 Sarah smiled back, the palm tingling with the sensations of the kiss. "I think it already is better."

> He opened his mouth to speak, only to be interrupted by the loud honk of a car horn from the streets outside.
 "What was that?"

> Damn car. "Only a car. It's nothing to worry about."
 "Is it one of those things I haven't seen before? Like that?" He nodded to the TV set.

> "I'll show you the car later, but want to see the TV?" Sarah grabbed the remote on the coffee table and jabbed the "on" button. The TV screen flickered to life.
 "I'm impressed." Jareth grinned.

> "Yeah, but this is the stupid cooking channel. I'm going to see if there's anything better-"
 Before she could touch the remote, however, the cooking show abruptly stopped, and ABC news anchor Jonathan Stevens appeared on the screen. "We interrupt this program with a special news announcement from our ABC station."

> Sarah froze. Uh oh. Something bad must have happened.
 Something bad did happen. "Sorry to interrupt you from your show, but we have just gotten word from our ABC news correspondent Stan Miller in Oakdale that apparently one hour ago, the Oakdale Fashion Mall had unexpectedly blown up, killing and injuring thousands of people inside. We have no further evidence as to who did this terrible crime, or if it was just an accident caused by some faulty wires inside the mall, but police are working frantically to find any further evidence. Here's Stan Miller joining us live at the site of the tragedy with the newest details."

> Stan Miller appeared on the screen along with a handful of solemn faced civilians at his side, the remnants of Oakdale Fashion Mall still smoking a block behind them. Police cars, ambulances, and TV vans were parked all around. "Yes, as a matter of fact, Jonathan, we did come up with some new evidence, we now think that..."
 Stan kept on talking, but Sarah couldn't hear him anymore. She had her hand pressed up to her mouth, and was breathing in shallow gasps.

> Oh my God...

> Jareth looked at Sarah with concern. "What's wrong?"
 "Look at the kid in the corner of the screen, Jareth!" She ran up to the TV set and pointed to a little boy whose face was mostly blocked out by the adults surrounding him.

> "What?"
 "Look! Look at him!"
> Jareth inhaled sharply as he saw. The boy had pointed ears.
<p>

****CHAPTER SIX****

"An elf, the boy's an elf!" Sarah shouted in disbelief. She pressed her foot down on the car's accelerator and whizzed past the third red light, narrowly missing a pedestrian crossing the street. "He's a damn elf!"

> "Yes, I know," Jareth replied a little unsteadily from the passenger's seat. "Can you slow down? I'm sure those red and green lights mean something."
 "Shut up. We're really close to Oakdale. I'm trying to get there before he... disappears or something."

> "I don't think we'll find him, Sarah, no matter how fast you go. Can you please slow down!"
 "Fine! It's right there! See?" Sarah spun the steering wheel and made a left turn, the tires screeching against the road. "There! There's the mall!"

> "Yes, I see it. Now just-"
 Sarah swerved to the edge of the road and slammed on the brakes. "Enough of you complaining. We get off here."

> Jareth looked at her sourly, his blond hair in disarray. If it had been a normal situation, Sarah would have grinned. This time, she barely noticed his miserable looks. "All right, now get out. We have to get moving."
 She opened her own car door, stepped out onto the sidewalk, and slammed it shut. Jareth came after her, glowering. He was hastily dressed in faded jeans, a blue sweater, and sneakers that Sarah's father had left at her apartment. Sarah had smeared a half a bottle of gel on his head to keep the rebellious blond hair down.

> It was beginning to stand up again, she noticed in exasperation.
 "What kind of clothes does your kind wear?" Jareth snarled. "I can barely move. And my head reeks of perfume."

> "You would not want to walk around like you normally do, believe me. Now let's get going!" Sarah grabbed his hand and ran toward the direction of the remains of the fashion mall.
 "I cannot wear an awful shirt like this!"

> "Oh, please. You look perfectly good."
 Understatement.

> "The pants are too loose."
 "Looks fine."

> "My hair is-"
 "You, 'sire' are too vain." She stopped running to face him and poked him playfully in the chest. "Now remember this. Just for today, you are not some king, okay? You're a human, and your name's Jerry."

> "Jerry?"
 She nodded. "So don't get all cocky on me and listen to everything I say because that's how everything is like in my world."

> "Sarah-"
 "Listen to me. Get rid of your kingly air and... act more like me. You know, more casual. If you know what that means."

> "Sarah-"
 "Just try to fit in, okay? And do not conjure anything up. No crystals, no snakes, nothing. Do everything I do. Not literally. You get my meaning."

> "Sarah-"
 "Oh, and you..."

> She couldn't finish, because Jareth had grabbed her close by the shoulders and kissed her hard on the lips, his soft mouth pressing firmly against hers. "Shush. Anything you say, all right?" He whispered huskily into her ear.
 "O-kay..." Sarah's legs were suddenly feeling unsteady. Her lips and body tingled where it had touched his, and her breathing was shallow. She found that she couldn't tear her gaze away from him.

> He was looking at her with an expression she couldn't read. There was something that burned deep in his eyes, something she couldn't put her finger on...
 _I can't believe it. He actually kissed me--
> And then Jareth pivoted away from her and yanked her after him, jolting her out of her thoughts.
 "Hurry, Sarah, we don't have forever." The look in his eyes was gone, replaced by the cold, all business glare of the Goblin King.
> "Yeah, yeah..."
 She ran after him, confusion spinning through her head.
> No matter how hard she tried to understand him, he was always going to a mystery. <p>

****CHAPTER SEVEN****

The closest they could get to the destroyed mall was within two blocks of it. Yards of bright yellow police tape crisscrossed along the trees and stop signs, glistening in the late afternoon sun. A hundred police officers and medical personnel scrambled in and out of the debris, removing survivors from the wreckage and whisking them away to hospitals in screaming ambulances.
> About twice as many onlookers and TV cameramen were crowded around the police tapes, hoping to get a better view of the destruction. Some people were crying, wailing, watching helplessly as their loved ones got carried onto stretchers. It was a mass of loud confusion.

 "Hey, Jerry!" Sarah strained to be heard over the noise.
> Jareth visibly flinched at the name. "What?"
 "We gotta split up. You go that way, I go this way. Meet by this sign after fifteen minutes, okay?"
> "Sure. I'll see you."
 Sarah watched him go, blending effortlessly in with the crowd, and breathed a sigh of relief. At least he wasn't going to attract any unnecessary attention. But then again, with his looks... She scowled as two college girls waggled their eyebrows demurely at him.
> You don't flirt in a place like this.
> Mentally shaking herself back to business, Sarah pushed through the crowd of people. The elf wasn't going to be hard to spot, considering that there were barely any kids at the scene, and nobody with pointy ears. She walked around, being careful not to overlook anything suspicious. She tried not to look suspicious herself, but soon found out that nobody paid the least bit of attention to her.
 Somebody bumped into her thigh and Sarah looked down, alarmed.
> It was a boy of five or six with a delicate, freckled face and sandy, chin lengthed hair. He wore a light green tunic, brown leggings, and brown, slipper-like shoes.
 "I'm sorry," the little boy stuttered nervously, and began to walk quickly away.
> Not so soon.
> Sarah silently gave a whoop of joy and hooked the elf by the collar of his tunic. "Timmy! Where were you? I was looking all over for you! You're going to be late for the play, let's go!"
 The elf looked at her, fear and confusion mixed in his bright green eyes. "You must be... mistaken."
> "Timmy! Don't play around with me or I'll tell your mom. Hurry--"

 The elf twisted around and bit her savagely in the hand.
> "Ooow!" Sarah instantly lost her grip on his shirt as his pointed teeth sunk into her skin.
 Nobody told me elves could bite!
> No time for that now... She looked up, and as she had expected, the elf was already making his getaway into the crowd.
 "Timmy! Get back right now!" She shoved her way past the people, her usual politeness evaporating. Just the elf. That was all that mattered.

> The elf frantically looked back, picked up speed. He was faster than Sarah, and she knew that she would eventually lose him.
 And then, out of nowhere, a hand clamped quickly around the elf's mouth as another one tightened around his waist.

> Who-?
 It was Jareth.

> He grinned triumphantly at her, the struggling elf trapped tightly in his grip.
 Sarah jogged up to him, barely suppressing a grin of her own. "Timmy! Don't you run away on me again, young man! Thank you, sir, for getting him."

> "Would you like me to walk you to your car?"
 "Sure. He's probably going to run away again."

> She began to walk toward her car, trying to look as much like an exasperated babysitter as possible.
 "Thank you so much. Timmy always misbehaves like this. Don't you, Timmy? Now did you know what your mom is going to do to me if you get hurt? You have to thank this man for getting you. Your play's in twenty minutes, what if you're late?"

> They reached the car and Sarah opened the backseat door.
 Jareth shoved the elf inside, who immediately began to scream bloody murder. "Help me! These bad people are going to take me away!"

> "Shut up!" Sarah snapped, as she and Jareth climbed into the car as quickly as possible. She turned the ignition and the car sped squealing down the road. <p>

****CHAPTER EIGHT****

"We know who you are," Sarah said to the elf as soon as they were on the privacy of the highway. "You're an elf."

> "What are you talking about?" The elf screeched, protesting. "I'm a boy!"
 "Sure. And I'm Mrs. Claus."

> "Who?"
 "Mrs. Claus. As in Santa Claus. And you just gave yourself away by not knowing who Santa Claus was, so don't deny it anymore."

> "Seriously. Who are you?" The elf asked instead.
 "I'm Sarah. That's Jareth."

> The elf's healthy, bronze colored face immediately paled. "Who?"
 Sarah smiled in contempt at the reflection of the fidgeting elf in the rearview mirror. "Jareth. The Goblin King?" She drawled snugly.

> "Hello," Jareth said.
 The elf nearly fainted. "I- I didn't recognize you, Your Majesty! Forgive me! I-"

> "That'll be all... What's your name?"
 "I'm Alvar, Your Majesty! I'm so sorry! Please don't throw me in the Bog of Stench! Please! Sarah! I'm so sorry I bit you I- Forgive me!"

> Sarah giggled involuntarily.
 "What's so funny?"

> "The little guy, Alvar. He's cute. Vicious, at times, though." She looked at the red bite marks on her hand.
 Jareth blinked several times and Sarah grinned. "Oh, soften up, Jerry. Or should I call you, Your Majesty?"

> "Neither." He leaned over and planted a light kiss on her cheek.
 The car swerved unsteadily down the road for a few seconds and Sarah felt her face growing red at Jareth's uncalled for action. Even the little elf in the backseat seemed to be holding back a grin.

> "Okay, that was unnecessary," she said, peering at him from the corner of her eye.
 "If it makes you do that again with your carriage, yes, it was unnecessary."

> "It's a car."
 "You know what I'm talking about."

> The elf cleared his throat self consciously. "How in the world did Your Majesty get down here? If you don't mind me asking."
 "No,

but first let me ask you."

> "It was so strange." Alvar frowned. "I was fishing by the creek with Beggle and we fell through a hole, I guess. At least that's what it felt like. We ended up right over there by the big structure. We decided to look around, and before I knew it, poof!" The elf made a gesture with his hands. "It blew up."
 "Wait a minute, wait a minute. Did you say you were with someone else?" Sarah asked, alarmed. Maybe he has another elf.

> "A troll, Beggle. Hoggle's younger brother. You know Hoggle?"
 "Yeah, as a matter of fact. Well, where's Beggle?"

> "I don't know. We separated soon after we appeared inside the structure. We wanted to split up and look around, because we didn't know where we were. So I went outside and I don't know where he went."
 "Did you see him again?"

> "No, I haven't. After he had been gone for some time, the structure just blew up!"
 "I hope he wasn't in the building." Jareth exhaled. "I will have to ask him some questions if I see him again."

> "But that's strange. I don't think Hoggle ever mentioned having a brother," Sarah said.
 "Well I'll bet we could find him... if he wasn't... you know." Alvar made a blowing up gesture with his hands. "He's small, like me, and he had a silver crescent moon tattooed on his arm."

> "Silver moon?"
 "Yeah." Silver moon. Sarah's forehead creased. Where had she seen a silver moon before? She couldn't remember. It's probably nothing.

> "Sarah! Watch out!" Jareth shouted as she narrowly missed running over a small squirrel scampering across the highway.
 "Whoops. Sorry." She smiled reassuringly back at Jareth and Alvar, but one phrase whispered ominously over and over in her head. _Silver moon._

****CHAPTER NINE****

When the three finally arrived at Sarah's apartment, Sarah had jogged down to the nearest fast food restaurant and grabbed a couple of hamburgers to take home. She hadn't realized how hungry she was until now. She had not eaten since- when? A day ago, more or less, her stomach growled angrily, and her every muscle ached.

> Sarah opened the door to her apartment. "Hey, guys?"
 "Yes, Sarah?" Jareth called from the living room. He was sitting cross-legged on the sofa, his head leaned back against the wall. From the looks of it, he was just as tired as her. His hair fell across his shoulders limply, and for the first time in ages, he didn't seem to care.

> Sarah smiled. "What were you guys doing?"
 Jareth rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand and looked up. "Alvar was telling me some information on Beggle. From what he tells me, Beggle is just as cowardly and utterly stupid as Hoggle. Which can be quite useful to us once we question him about Aberanne."

> Aberanne?
 Sarah kicked off her shoes and walked over to Jareth with her bag of food. "What does Beggle have to do with Aberanne?"

> "The moon on his arm," Alvar cut in. He was standing at her bookcase, leafing through the tattered novels that lined the shelves. "Remember?"
 Jareth unfolded himself from the sofa and walked over to Sarah. "I remembered as soon as you left. Aberanne had the same kind of a moon on her forehead."

> Sarah gasped. Duh. How could she have forgotten? "Of course! It's like... her mark of something, right? Everyone who works with her has

the same kind of-"
 "Actually, yes and no. The mark on her forehead symbolizes the kind of magic she works. If you work white magic, your symbol looks something like this." Jareth reached down his shirt and pulled out the sickle shaped silver pendant that hung around his neck. "A moon, I think, symbolizes black magic. Spellcraft and the sort."

> "So I see. Beggle works black magic."
 "Most likely. But we would have never found out if it wasn't for Alvar telling us about the moon on his arm. You cannot tell by just looking if a person works magic or not. Some want to show off their skills by showing their symbol in plain sight, and some don't bother with symbols. In the case of Beggle, showing it off was his weakness. Now we can find him easily."

> "Speaking of weakness, I bet we're all pretty weak right now so I got some food." Sarah jiggled the bag.
 "Food?" Jareth lifted an eyebrow and eyed the paper bag with doubt.

> "Oh, stop it." Sarah grinned, punched him lightly in the shoulder. "If you don't want to eat, me and Alvar will kindly take your share."
 "You betcha, Your Majesty!" Alvar trotted up to Sarah and took the paper bag from her hands. "Whatever it is, it smells pretty good."

> "Why do I get the sense everyone is revolting against me?" Jareth smiled slowly at Sarah, and her heart fluttered at the sheer beauty of it.
 "Because I'm the princess of this house, Jareth. You listen to everything I say. Jerry?"

> "Oh please, stop. Not that hideous name again. I still have to tell you about Beggle."
 Jareth walked over to Alvar, who had pulled up a chair in the dining room, and was sitting down to examine the contents of the dinner. "Smells like the Bog, I would say."

> "Whatever. I don't know what you eat in your kingdom." Sarah sat down in a chair and grabbed a hamburger. She peeled off the paper wrapping and bit into it slowly. A hamburger had never tasted so good in her life. "So tell me about Beggle," She said around a mouthful of burger.
 "Well if he's studying black magic, there's a ninety percent chance he's learning it from Aberanne, since there's not that many people who know black magic," Alvar sneered. "I would have never known. I mean, Beggle! He seems like he doesn't even know how to write, much less use magic."

> "Powerful magicians can be deceiving," Jareth said as he grabbed a hamburger out of the bag. "They can be the last person you would expect them to be."
 "You've got that right. Beggle."

> "And we don't even know where he is right now. He might be dead, for all I know." Sarah shrugged.
 "Maybe." Jareth looked at his hamburger dubiously before finally taking a small bite. "Not bad."

> "See?" Sarah smiled smugly.
 Jareth shrugged. "It's not that good, but I'll have to eat this no matter how bad it tastes. Tomorrow we are going on a wild goose chase for Beggle."

> "I know." Sarah rubbed her eyes. Suddenly, the mention of tomorrow made her feel ready to fall over.
 I am so tired.

> "Yeah, but how about we call it a night tonight, okay? We have to rest now in order for us to actually get up in the morning," she said.
 "I'm all for it." Alvar nodded enthusiastically.

> "All right then," Jareth agreed.
 "Great." She leaned back in her chair and sighed.

> Despite the pain and fatigue that weighed down her body, an odd sense of family washed over her as she smiled at her friends.
 Never felt like this at home.

> She wanted to stay here more than any other place in the world. She wondered if she would have felt like this if she had stayed in the

Labyrinth with Jareth.
 "So now after we finish eating, what do we do?" Alvar asked.

> "We get to cleanse ourselves of all this filth," Jareth said, wrinkling his nose.
 "He means we get to take a shower," Sarah translated.

> "Not together, hopefully." He winked at her.
 "Jareth! Of course not!"

> Jareth ducked and laughed, the wrapper that Sarah threw at him sailing over his head.
 "Such a pity."

> Sarah blushed bright red, and Jareth chuckled. "All right, all right! You can go first, but make it quick." "Only for three hours. Fine with all of you?"
 Alvar grinned. "Of course. Not."

> Sarah swallowed the last bit of her hamburger and rolled her eyes at him. "Why don't I get going now, while you guys are still eating?" She said, serious again. "Then we get a good night's sleep and decide what to do in the morning."
 "Yes, I think that should be right." Jareth waved his hand to dismiss her. "Hurry."

****CHAPTER TEN****

Ten minutes later, Sarah was standing under her shower, the hot flows of water coursing down her body and soothing her tired muscles. It felt as if she hadn't taken a shower for a year, and she had to force herself to grab the shampoo bottle from the edge of the tub and squeeze some onto her damp hair. She needed to hurry up, and she needed to sleep. It was nearing ten in the evening, and tomorrow... well, she didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow.

> Sarah slowly lathered up her hair, then stuck her head under the water to rinse off the shampoo. It was hard to believe just what was happening to her. The gaps in the two worlds, Aberanne, Jareth, the elves... none of it made sense.
 It's not supposed to make sense.

> Just like her adventure into the Labyrinth three years ago. It was undoubtedly real, yet it felt like as if she was inside a dream.
 But the thing that awed her the most was Jareth. He had changed so much, mellowed out. She couldn't believe that just three years ago, he was the one who had taken Toby and forced her to go through the Labyrinth.

> But I was the one who wished him away.

> Well, that was true. She had never truly thought of that. She had been the one who wished Toby gone, and so he came and whisked the baby far away from her. Once inside the Labyrinth, she had been the one who told him the Labyrinth was a piece of cake, so he had reordered time for her. Nothing was his fault, he had just been doing what she asked him to do.
 A drop of soap water entered her eye, startling her out of her reverie, and she put her face under the water to rinse it away. It was time to think about getting out. She needed to sleep, and besides, both Jareth and Alvar were waiting for her.

> Five more minutes.

> Sarah closed her eyes. Then again, it would be nice to fall asleep right here, she thought, grinning.
 A sharp rap at the door made her jump about ten feet into the air. "Geez! Is that you, Jareth?"

> "Sarah, I-"
 "You scared me!"

> Whatever he said next was unintelligible as the rush of water drowned out his voice.
 So much for the long shower.

> Sarah twisted the handle behind her, and the water faded away. "What did you say?" She called again.
 "Alvar's gone."

> "What?!" Sarah immediately snapped to attention.
 "Alvar's

gone," Jareth said tersely. "Get out, we have to look for him."
> "Oh, no. Where did you see him last?" Sarah pushed back the shower curtains and stepped out of the tub. She grabbed a white, fuzzy bathrobe and flung it on.
 "He was going to your room, Sarah, and he never came out. I went to find him and found the window open instead."
> Oh, damn. Sarah flinched at the news. There had always been a thin layer of mystery around the little elf, but she had pushed the thought into the back of her mind and never paid attention to it.

 Jareth knocked on the door again. "Hurry up."
> "Yeah." Sarah opened the door, feeling a blast of cold air hit her face and body. And just for a split second, the hard look on Jareth's face flickered away as he saw her.
 Sarah blushed, feeling completely exposed in front of him. The memory of their kiss floated back into her mind. "So what do we do now?" She stuttered, involuntarily patting her tangled hair into place.
> Jareth crossed his arms and tapped his fingers impatiently. "Find the bastard. Sarah, we shouldn't have trusted him. We were in the wrong time and place, and Alvar just didn't seem right."
 "I know, I know. Look, I'll get dressed and we... I don't know. Try to find him or something." It was going to be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Sarah rubbed her eyes, feeling the lack of sleep take its effect on her. From the living room, the Felix the Cat wall clock purred twelve times.

3. Whoo Hoo! The End...

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Sarah wondered if Jareth had ever felt cold before in his life. He was wearing the same thing he had on in the afternoon, jeans and a thin sweater. Sarah, on the other hand, was bundled up in a warm coat, and shivering. The weather had taken a sudden dip from the sunny warmth of the day. A chilly breeze was blowing, waving Sarah's cold damp hair into her face.

Just what I want. Sheer exhaustion and a cold. Wonderful. I can't believe I'm doing this.

Sarah stomped her feet on the sidewalk to keep warm. "I'm freezing, Jareth. How about you?"

"No," he said simply. "If we start looking for that elf, you wouldn't be so cold anymore."

"Looking?" She squeaked. This was too much. It was past midnight, and the whole world was asleep. She felt ready to fall over, to fall asleep right there on the sidewalk. "Have you ever opened a phone book directory, Jareth? There are a lot of people living in this town, Jareth. Very many in fact. Too many. The point is, finding Alvar in a community of thousands on people won't be so easy. It would be difficult. Very, very, very, very difficult."

"Left or right?"

"What?"

"Are we taking the left path or right path?"

"We go-" Sarah groaned, subdued. "I don't know. What do you think?"

"We don't know where he is. One path is just as good as the other. Left."

"Right."

"So we go left."

"I mean, we go right."

"We should go left."

"Ugh. Whatever." Sarah grabbed Jareth by the sleeve of his shirt and dragged him straight forward. "We go ahead, okay?"

"Where are we headed?"

They crossed the deserted road, and Sarah strained to see the street signs in the dim orange glow of the streetlight. "Kearny street. If we go straight, we'll be at the place where I first fell through into the Labyrinth."

"I see. "

"Do you think Alvar got sucked back into those gaps between the worlds? He might be in the Labyrinth now."

"It's a possibility, but the window in your room was opened when it had been closed before, so I'm sure he escaped for some reason."

"I just don't know why." Sarah picked up her pace, the exercise warming her up a little. "He seemed to trust us before."

"Never trust anyone, Sarah."

"Is that so? That means I can't trust you," she teased.

"Believe what you want," he said, shrugging fractionally.

Believe what you want.

Sarah bit her lip. "That was what my mother used to say."

"So she doesn't say it anymore?"

"No. She died in a car crash with her boyfriend."

"I'm sorry I mentioned it." Jareth's voice was soft.

"No, actually I thank you for mentioning it. After she died, everybody else tried to make me believe all sorts of different things. My mom's boyfriend's parents thought she killed him and gave me this big lecture on how careless she was and how she was a bad woman. My father thought her boyfriend killed her, so he was spouting off on how bad Jeremy was. And through all this, everyone was like, 'Wear seatbelts, blah, blah, blah.' And everybody told me how sad they were for me, but... few people really know. Anyway."

Sarah watched her breath come out of her mouth, visible in the chilly air. "Am I boring you?"

"No, Sarah. Never."

"Well."

"Well."

They walked on in silence. The hustle bustle of the day had faded to nothingness in the nighttime. The streets were empty, and the houses and old fashioned shops on either side of them were dark.

A dark shadow moved on the other side of the street, catching Sarah's eye, and she tensed. Uh oh. She motioned for Jareth to freeze.

The dark shadow slinked out of the darkness and under a streetlight.

For a moment, Sarah stood confused, the image of the person meaning nothing to her. Then, realization dawned, and she breathed a sigh of relief and exasperation. "Let's go, Jareth. It's nothing."

"Who is she?"

"Uh... no one we need to worry about." Sarah tugged at Jareth to get moving.

The woman under the lamplight noticed them, and she smiled slowly at Jareth, paying no attention to Sarah. "Hi, honey." She ran a red fingered hand suggestively across her generous chest. "Wanna get... lucky?"

Sarah mentally pinched herself to keep herself from laughing. The situation was ridiculous. Jareth was staring at the woman, confused. He opened his mouth to speak, but Sarah quickly pushed him back. "He's mine, okay? So take a hike," She rumbled softly, licking her lips sexily at him. The years of drama class had definitely paid off.

The smiling woman on the other side of the street glared at Sarah sharply, then blew a kiss at Jareth. "Well, I'll see you some other time then, honey." She sauntered off, back into the darkness.

Sarah made a noise of distaste as she disappeared from view. "Sorry, Jareth. Forget about that."

"Who was that?"

"Somebody who..." Sarah trailed off, thinking of the right words to say. "Offers her body for men to indulge in for money."

Jareth coughed, noticeably embarrassed. "I see."

"So, why don't we start looking for Alvar?"

"Good idea."

They began walking on.

A lonely hoot of an owl floated down to Sarah's ears, and she looked up at Jareth, who smiled sadly.

"The owl is the only bird that lives in both my world and yours. It's beautiful," he whispered, distant.

"But you can turn into one, can't you?"

"No, not after you defeated me. After the clock struck thirteen, I had the choice of either living as an owl for the rest of my life, or as myself. I chose to live as myself, but I lost the ability to turn back into an owl, and with that, goes the ability to transport myself from here to there."

He paused. "There's more to it than I can put into words. When I was the owl, I had some of the feelings of an owl. The owl doesn't feel compassion when it goes to attack its prey, and it doesn't love. But when the owl part of me died, so did the coldness of the owl. I'm boring you, Sarah."

"No, never. I mean, I was going to ask you about it." Sarah placed her hands in her coat pocket. "Well, I guess it's all my fault. I killed some part of you."

"We were enemies back then. We did what we had to do. We have to leave that behind now, Sarah. And besides, I wouldn't say you killed part of me."

"You're right. You're still as stubborn as ever."

"Only because you are."

"Whatever." She smiled at him widely. "And not only stubborn, you're proud, too."

"And vain." He smiled back. "I don't plan on looking like a little goblin."

"And even if you do, no one's going to see you. It's one or two in the morning."

"Everyone in Oakdale saw me as a little goblin when we drove to that... shopping center this afternoon."

"A lot of people saw you kiss me." The words popped out of Sarah's mouth as if they had a will of their own.

"I didn't notice."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring it up." Sarah stopped walking and looked down at her feet, refusing to meet his eyes. Her heart was fluttering in her chest. She had been thinking about that kiss for more times than she could count.

"Sarah, no one is watching now," Jareth whispered. He turned so that he stood opposite her.

"Really?" Her voice was no more than a breath. She lifted her eyes to meet his, and they were dark in the moonlight. "I didn't notice."

Jareth cupped a hand behind her neck, slowly stroking her hair. Sarah felt her skin light on fire beneath his fingers, and her breath caught in her throat.

Jareth curved his other arm around her waist and pulled her close. She could feel his heart pounding as fast as hers through the layers of clothing.

Then he leaned down and brushed his lips over hers once, twice. The little touches were electrifying, yet so incredibly chaste and innocent, as if it was his first time kissing a girl.

Sarah whimpered.

He stopped and looked at her, desire evident in his gaze.

"Jareth, please..." She lifted her mouth to meet his, and then they were both lost in each other's soul as their lips folded together.

He was kissing her tenderly, slowly. She kissed him back, holding his face softly with her hands. And to her surprise, she felt a wetness there on his cheek. She wiped that away. _Jareth, don't cry._ She lost track of time, the only thing that mattered was here, now. Alvar didn't matter, Aberanne didn't matter. It was just the two of them, flying inside their own universe, and Sarah never wished it to end. But it did, and Jareth pulled away, bringing them back into reality.

Sarah opened her eyes, gazing into his face. He moved to kiss her again, but pulled back as their lips met, clearing his throat self consciously.

"I think we should go back, Sarah. It's too late."

"Yeah." She still tasted the kiss, and it was bittersweet on her lips. "We might find Alvar on the way back."

At the mention of Alvar's name, a small shriek came from behind them. "Help me! Someone!"

"Alvar?" Sarah gently detached herself from Jareth and looked back.

A small figure was running towards them, gasping and panting.

"It is Alvar." Jareth muttered.

"Sarah? Your Majesty? Thank the gods!" Alvar ran up to them, panic clearly seen inside his eyes. "Aberanne! She's here! She got me!" He wheezed between shallow breaths.

"Aberanne's here?" Sarah tensed. This was bad. "How? When?"

"I don't know! She-" he took a couple of deep breaths and rested his hands on his knees. "I was in Sarah's room, looking around. And then Aberanne popped out of nowhere! And then she dragged me away!"

"To where?" Jareth asked.

"It doesn't matter! I was- in a park or something. She was going to kill me! She was going to kill me!"

"Okay, calm down, Alvar." Sarah knelt in front of him, matching her eye level with his. "Tell me what happened."

Alvar took a deep breath. "See, Beggle had been working with Aberanne ever since day one! When we fell into one of those portals, he happened to step into another one while we were at the big building, sending him back to the Labyrinth. He told Aberanne right away that I was still here."

"And then?"

"But first I have to tell you that after you and Jareth escaped, Aberanne had been perfecting on her spellcraft. She managed to step over to this world! She blew up that building in hopes of killing me, but I was out, luckily. And then she went looking for us, and she finally found me! But I escaped. Thank the gods it was dark out, or else she would have found me. But the news is far from good! Don't you see? Aberanne is one step away from making her dream come true! All she needs to do is kill us three, since we're the only people who know about her, then she could start launching her invasion!"

"Where is she now, Alvar?" Jareth asked.

"I don't know. She could be right behind us. But I do know a good place to hide. See?" Alvar pointed a long finger at something up the road. Sarah turned to see the "ghost house" on the block ahead, dark and foreboding.

Good a place as any.

She stood up and motioned for them to come. "We might as well."

"Is this the place you told me about?" Jareth questioned as he caught up to her.

"Yeah, this is it. Hurry. Run." She broke into a jog. "Alvar? You keep a lookout."

Jareth suddenly grabbed Sarah by the shoulder and turned her around. "Alvar just disappeared."

"What? He did?" No, no, no, no... Sarah looked, but Alvar was nowhere to be seen.

"He's gone. I didn't keep my eye on him for one second and he disappeared. I think that Alvar's-"

Suddenly, the faint beam of a flashlight shone from two blocks behind them, waving through the darkness. "Who's there?" somebody called.

It took Sarah a moment to recognize the gruff voice of the local policeman, Mr. Sheridan. Some neighbors must have called the police because of the noise we were causing, Sarah thought. The last thing that she wanted was a run in with the cops.

"Forget about Alvar. Run, Jareth." She grabbed his hand and she ran towards the broken down house as quickly as possible.

"What was that?" He hissed.

Sarah reached the door and pushed it open with a creak. "Get in."

They stepped inside, and Sarah shut the door, exhaling. "It was the police. The last thing we want is for the police to find us."

"And Aberanne." He paused a moment. "And Alvar."

Sarah gasped and stared at him through the dark. "What do you mean, 'and Alvar'?" She ran a hand through her hair, smoothing it away from her face.

"I have a feeling that Alvar might not be the innocent little elf that he is," Jareth whispered into her ear. Then out loud, he said, "Trust nobody, Sarah."

The sound of light, muffled footsteps came from the center of the room. "You've got that right, Your Majesty." There was a small clicking noise, and a halogen flashlight bathed the whole room in a soft white light. Alvar, holding the flashlight in hand, gave Sarah a smile that showed all his pearly, pointed teeth. "Hi, Sarah."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Alvar placed the flashlight on the ground facing up, and the room danced with dark shadows. "Sarah, you should listen to your sweetheart once in a while, you know? He does make a good decision once or twice every century," he mocked.

"Alvar! What the hell?" Sarah backed up a step, feeling her back touch the door. The truth was dawning upon her, bit by bit. I never knew. I never, ever knew. She reached down to grab the doorknob, but Alvar lifted one finger, and the doorknob clicked under Sarah's hand. Sarah jiggled it, found that it was locked.

"Alvar, I suppose you wouldn't mind telling us what you are doing?" Jareth said, his voice as cold as ice water.

"All in due time, Jareth. All in due time." Alvar gestured to the broken timbers and debris lying around in the room. "In the meanwhile, make yourselves comfortable. I have quite a bit to tell you."

"Get on with it, Alvar. Say what you must."

"If you insist, Your Majesty." He walked over to a fallen piece of lumber and sat down upon it. "First of all, let me say that you two have been the biggest idiots I have ever known. You have believed every single lie I have wrapped around you. But in the end, when it was too late, Jareth was smart enough to realize that something was fishy." He snorted. "For beginners: You actually believed that Aberanne was going to take over the world? You'll be relieved to know that Aberanne is not planning to take over the world. You'll be even more relieved to find out that Aberanne doesn't even exist! Look at

me, you guys."

Sarah looked at Alvar sitting stretched out and relaxed on the piece of lumber, and the image of Aberanne sitting on the throne flashed into her mind.

"Oh, my God..." Sarah gasped as she saw the resemblance. He was right, there was no Aberanne, he was Aberanne. How could I have ever missed this? Aberanne was right in front of my face for the whole day.

Alvar/ Aberanne grinned. "All it takes is a little makeup and a dress, and I can turn into anyone I want to be. I succeeded in fooling you guys, my army, and your army, Jareth!" He doubled over in fits of laughter, clutching at his sides.

"You are filthy," Jareth spat, the anger in his eyes flaring.

"Think whatever you will of me. You'll be dead in an hour, anyway!" Alvar chuckled. "Let me tell you something. That whole story about the gaps popping up between the worlds and stuff? The thing about me wanting to take over the world? That was bullshit. Have you ever paused a minute to think that if there were so many gaps in the worlds, the other people of the world would be popping in and out as well? Where are the missing persons reports? Where are the other elves and gnomes and goblins? Why haven't anybody else disappeared or showed up? Why just you?"

Sarah was dizzy. All that Alvar said ... they made perfect sense. The 'taking over the world' thing was just crap. The 'passing between worlds' was just crap. Just crap.

"I don't want to take over the world, you guys. I'm happy to be Alvar, ruler of the kingdom of myself. To put it in short, you guys, everything that had happened to you in the past two days were lies. When dear little Sarah wanted to kill herself in here, I was the one who broke the table leg. So when she was choking, I carried her over to the Labyrinth world without her noticing. And when I was chasing after you, I touched Sarah, who was holding on to your hand, and brought both of you back here." Alvar put his hands behind his head and leaned back lazily. "I made you believe that the whole world was in danger, and that everyone was popping helplessly in and out of the worlds, when in fact, it was just you two. And I did a good job at it."

"And you being on TV? That was a lie? And Beggle?" Sarah asked weakly.

Alvar nodded enthusiastically. "Yep. Well, the TV thing was partially true. I made the building blow up. Simple magic. And I purposely posed in front of the camera. But I wasn't sure if you guys would watch the TV, but the news was pretty big, so you would see it sooner or later. As luck would have it, you watched it right away! And Beggle? Oh, I made up the whole thing about Beggle. Hoggle never had a brother, so that was why he never told you!" He laughed as if it was the funniest joke in the world.

"Alvar, what do you want? Why are you turning the world upside down?" Jareth demanded, taking a step closer to him.

"Little old me? Simple." His happy attitude quickly died away and he stared at Jareth menacingly. "I want you dead, Jareth. And her." He nudged his head shortly in Sarah's direction.

"What? Why?" Sarah stared at Alvar, tears forming in her eyes. He had been such a good friend to me and it had all been a big lie.

"For destroying my life, that's why!" Alvar howled. "Ever since Jareth sent you into that Labyrinth with your 'Hoggle' and 'Sir Didymus' and 'Ludo'. You got your brother back, and everything seemed perfect for you, but what about the rest of us? The Labyrinth was screwed! Jareth, the incompetent ruler, brings havoc and imbalance into our kingdom by inviting you in, and then he has to lose to you! To a stupid girl! He turned into an owl! The goblins begin stamping out the countryside, wrecking everything! My house and my family were destroyed! I had to do something!"

"If the conflict is with me, leave her aside."

"You're so helplessly in love with her you're helpless," Alvar jeered, rolling his eyes. "After you turn back into a silly little human, every single thought that you think of is Sarah, Sarah, Sarah. You are the king, Jareth, you have a kingdom to take care of! The goblins were too dimwitted to revolt against you, and the other species lived too far away from your castle to revolt. My life was basically ruined because of you! I wanted you dead, and I still do. And I want her dead for ever making you this way! I want you two to die a very painful and torturous death."

"It's not her fault that I did what I did. Let her go."

"Jareth, no-!" Sarah ran up to him, looked at him pleadingly.

"See? The missy wants to stay. If I wanted to kill just you, I would have done so already. I want to see you lovebirds die side by side." Alvar sneered. "And don't think I'm not capable of killing you. I've been alive for more than eight thousand years, and I've seen many kings come and go, but none so young and pathetic as you, Jareth. After he's dead, I'll make sure someone new and strong takes the throne and rules the Labyrinth. It's suffered too long under this weakling."

"If you want the throne, you can have it. If this is what it's all about."

"I don't want the throne, I have already told you before. I don't want you on the throne! You killed my family, ruined my estate, and had my friends turn against me. Is this reason enough? Look! I want to see you and Sarah dead. I want my revenge!"

"Look- Alvar," Sarah began.

"Shut up," He snapped. "I've talked long enough. I've told you everything. And now you die. Slowly and painfully."

"No!" Sarah shrieked, launching herself at Alvar, but was jerked back by something at her feet, and she sprawled face first onto the dirt floor. She looked frantically back, found that steel shackles had grown out of nowhere and had clamped both of her feet to the ground.

"You die last, Sarah. Jareth goes first," Alvar screamed, and held out his slim hand to the direction of Jareth. A blinding fireball formed in his palm, and he launched it at Jareth, laughing diabolically. Jareth lunged to one side, the fireball missing his head and grazing past his hair. The fireball suddenly changed direction as if it had a will of its own, and flew up to the ceiling above. A rain of sparks showered down on Jareth and Sarah as it hit the ceiling.

Sarah screamed, covering her face with her hands. She struggled to pull herself away from the shackles, but they held fast, digging into her skin.

"Alvar, you betrayer." Jareth spat. He jumped to his feet and walked over to the grinning elf.

"What are you going to do? Any sudden movements from you and your girlfriend goes bye, bye."

Jareth stopped dead in his tracks. "Don't touch her."

"Too late."

Sarah felt something tighten around her waist, fastening her to the ground. Three steel bands had grown out of the ground and wrapped themselves around her.

Jareth glanced quickly at her, but kept his gaze pinned to Alvar. "How dare you..." And then a blood red crystal appeared in his hand, and as quick as lightening, he launched it at Alvar.

Alvar had been taken off guard, and the crystal hit him squarely in the stomach. He flew back with the force of it, ramming into the wall and knocking the flashlight onto the ground. Wild lights danced around the room.

"Jareth, you idiot!" He struggled to get up, but three more crystals had been conjured into Jareth's hands, and they flew toward Alvar, pinning him into the wall.

Sarah watched and struggled, tears streaming down her face. At this point Alvar was bleeding, helpless, but Jareth was also weakening. Beads of perspiration dotted his forehead, and his mouth was pressed into a firm line. The magic was humming around the dim room as Jareth's crystals pummeled into Alvar, lighting the air with flashes.

And then it stopped as quickly as it had started. Alvar was silent, and he slumped over on the ground in a little pool of his blood. Jareth gasped for breath, staggered for a moment as he clutched his chest.

"Jareth! Are you okay?" Sarah tried to twist around to get a better look at him. No, he didn't seem to be okay. He was too pale, and his face showed pain. "Jareth, rest."

"I'm fine. I think he's dead." Jareth walked carefully over to Alvar.

"Jareth..." No, no, no, don't go over there. The fight had ended rather quickly, extremely quickly. "Stop! Jareth! Move back!" Sarah screamed, a second too late.

The elf lifted himself from the puddle of blood and hurled himself at Jareth, throwing him on his back. "You're not that easy to kill, Your Majesty!" He seethed, blood spraying from his lips onto Jareth's face. He held both of his hands to Jareth's throat and began squeezing.

"Alvar, stop!" Sarah could hear herself screaming the words, pleading.

Jareth was too weak. She could see him struggle to throw the elf off, but the elf hung on, unshakable.

This can't be happening.

She didn't know what to do. But she had to do something... Oh my God, he's dying! The flashlight. It lay there three feet in front of her, if she could just reach it... Sarah stretched out her arm, ignoring the tearing pain from her sides. She needed to reach it. Her fingers touched it and she pulled it over to her. "Alvar!" She screamed hoarsely at him. She shone the beacon of light directly into the elf's face.

Alvar yelled sharply, a hand flying automatically to his eyes. It was all the time that Jareth needed. He flung Alvar off of him and stood to his feet.

"No!" Alvar uttered a cry that was barely human. He slashed his claws across Jareth's abdomen. Jareth gripped his stomach, took a step back.

Sarah screamed as she saw thick, dark blood stream through his fingers. "No!"

"Sarah..." He whispered.

"No! Don't!" Sarah was crying, the dirt streaking her face.

Jareth stumbled and fell to the ground, holding his abdomen.

Alvar looked at him and laughed triumphantly, his innocent little boy face twisting into something so evil that Sarah had could not recognize it.

"Jareth!" She cried, ignoring the elf. His breathing was labored, fast. The blood streamed through his fingers in little rivulets, like red rivers crossing through a land of snow.

"Jareth, please don't give up." She was not going to leave this house without him.

Alvar stopped his laughing and turned to face Sarah. "Now that I'm finished with him, it's your turn!" He declared.

Sarah turned to look at him, murder in her eyes. "I trusted you. You were my friend. You betrayed both of us!" She flung the flashlight

with all her strength at Alvar's head.

He stumbled backwards from the blow, landing beside Jareth.

And then Jareth struggled to his feet. He kicked the surprised Alvar once in the side. "You won't kill her. Ever." He held his hand away from his bleeding abdomen, and something happened that made Sarah nearly faint.

Jareth began to... shine. He was radiating pure white light from his wound, and the light wrapped itself around him, blinding Sarah. He held out his hand towards Alvar, and suddenly the light shot out from his fingers.

Alvar screamed, uttered something Sarah could not make out. The light smothered him for a minute, and he gradually disappeared, dissolving into the light.

For a second all was quiet. The light faded away, the room dimmed, and Alvar was nowhere to be seen.

"Jareth?" Sarah called. She found that she could move, that the shackles and steel bands around her had faded away with Alvar. She scrambled to her feet, ran over to Jareth.

Just then she thought he was going to be okay, that he was going to be well. The wound was just a flesh wound, he was just tuckered out.

But he staggered. "Sarah..." He smiled at her, and fell to the ground.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"No, don't do this." Sarah knelt beside him.

"It's the least I could do. The light-" He coughed.

"What was it?" She asked, but she already knew. His life energy. He had used his life energy, the last ounce of power he had left, to save her life, to destroy Alvar.

"A little trick, nothing much," he whispered.

"It can't end this way..." Tears streamed down her cheeks and dropped onto his face. She was crying openly, loudly. She didn't care what he thought of her now, just as long as he lived.

"This is the only way it can end," he whispered, a wistful smile flickering across his pale lips.

Sarah found his hand and enclosed it tightly within hers. It was so weak and cold, and she could feel his life drifting away through her fingers.

No.... not here, not now...

"I could get you to a hospital or something... Just rest! You'll get better." Useless. She knew she was babbling and lying to him, to herself.

"Sarah, promise-" he coughed before he could finish, and red liquid dripped down his chin.

She instinctively wiped at the blood with her trembling hand, but it smeared his cheek instead. Jareth feebly pushed her hand away as she tried to clean the red streak off of his face.

"It's all right."

Even with the blood and dirt staining his clothes, his hair, his face, he had never looked so beautiful.

_This can't be happening. _

"You can't d-" Sarah couldn't bring herself to say the word, even though she had said it so carelessly in years past. The word was filthy, obscene, a curse. She bit her lip and tasted blood.

Blood, blood everywhere.

Jareth inhaled, shuddering. "Die? I'm afraid that I-"

"No!" Sarah shook her head. "No."

"Promise me, Sarah. After I'm gone you will never think of me again."

"No, I'm not going to promise you that," she managed to say through her sobs.

"Stubborn to the end, I should say."

"Yes, and so are you."

They looked at each other, Jareth's astonishing blue and green eyes gazing focused into her soft brown ones. After a long moment he spoke up again. "Well, promise me this, then. Live life. Don't do what you had been planning to do that day."

His voice reached her ears but she didn't understand them as her grief threatened to overtake her.

"I love you," she whispered through her tears, and it was only then that she realized that she loved him... from the first day she saw him she had loved him.

"I'm not dead yet, Sarah, don't start with the soppy stuff." He tried to smile.

"Shut up, Jareth." She wanted to slap him for his twisted comment, but she smoothed out his hair, and ran her fingers down his bloodstained face instead.

They were still defying each other, matching wits, right up until the end, she thought distantly.

"Promise me you'll live your life." He coughed again, violently.

"But how can I live without you?" She bent down and gave him a brief kiss on his mouth, ignoring the blood. His lips were soft and cool, and he kissed her back gently.

Sarah lifted her face, licking the blood away from her lips, and she saw that his mismatched eyes were wet.

And all of a sudden his walls crumbled and the tears rolled down his cheeks. "I'm sorry I look like this, Sarah, I'm so sorry I didn't do the best I could. Alvar was right, I was an idiot-"

"Shush. I promise you." She cut him off firmly. She had thought it through. She was going to live. It was what Jareth wanted, and this would be the least she could give him.

Jareth sighed. "I love you, Sarah. Forever." He smiled gently at her, and closed his eyes.

There was no more movement from him other than the shallow rising and falling of his chest.

Sarah held him, gazing into his face. He looked so peaceful, his eyelashes dark crescents against his cheeks and his lips forming a trace of a smile.

And she could tell that he wasn't afraid to die. He seemed... relieved and surprisingly younger, as if a lifetime of burden had been lifted from his back.

She sighed. Maybe this was the only way for it to end. Their love would have never survived in her world or his. He was a king, after all, and she was just a girl who needed to move on in her life.

But that's not an excuse.

Sarah shook her head, a teardrop falling onto his face. No, it wasn't an excuse. It was the truth, and it hurt like hell.

She had questioned herself so often, just what would happen if she had never met him.

Life would have been nothing, of course. Questions unanswered, dreams unfulfilled.

She had never known the answer until now. He had shown her a world so different from hers, he had shown her love and friendship. He had passed through her life like a warm breeze, and offered her hope when there was none.

"I'm so glad I met you, Jareth. I'm so happy I knew you," she whispered into his ear. She lifted her head and looked down at him.

The rising and falling of his chest had stilled. He had gently slipped away, and Sarah knew that he was in a better place, away from his lifetime of pain.

She leaned close and kissed him gently on his lips.

_Live life... _

She smiled down at him, placed his hands neatly at his sides. "I will live my life to the fullest, Jareth. I'll love you in my dreams." She kissed him quickly one more time, then stood up and began to walk to the door.

As she reached it, she turned back and saw that he was no longer there, and all of the blood had disappeared. It was as if nothing had happened.

Wait- no.

A silver object glistened under the early morning sunlight that peeked through the disintegrating roof. She walked over to it and saw that it was Jareth's silver necklace. She picked it up and looped it around her neck, feeling the sickle shaped pendant rest comfortably against her body. And for a split second she felt Jareth's presence with her, reassuring her.

White magic. I'll always be one with the light.

Sarah wiped away her tears and smiled.

She walked over to the door and began to place her hand on the doorknob, but the cracked, wooden door opened wide as she touched it, knocking her to one side.

What the hell?

Sarah jumped back, a brief moment of panic washing over her.

"Sarah?"

She lifted her eyes to the voice, and the familiar face looked eyes with her.

"Dad!"

"Oh, God, Sarah!" With a rush, he swept her up in his arms, his unshaven chin scratching against her cheek. "Where were you?"

"I'm so sorry, Dad, I really am. I love you so much." She was crying again as she hugged him close. "I'm sorry. I just needed to get away for a couple of days."

"Never mind that. At least you're here." He detached her from his arms and held her at arms length. "You look terrible."

"Thanks." Sarah smiled through her tears. "You know, I was just thinking. Thinking about my life and how I thought it sucked so much. But- Geez. I guess it was just me. I mean, I have to move on. I guess I owe everyone an apology."

"And so do I, Sarah." Her father inhaled. "Especially to you. When your mother walked out on me, I was... grief stricken. But I figured I had to move on. Marry again and start a better life. But I shouldn't have taken everything so fast, you know? Sometimes you just have to slow down once a while and think. And ask for other people's ideas. I was so selfish. I was-"

"You were trying to make a better life for me."

"Yes. I tried. I don't know if it worked or not."

"Dad, when you married my stepmother, I was angry. Not at her. I realize that now. I was angry my mother had left us and I thought you didn't think I was important anymore when you married my stepmom."

"You? You're the most important person in my life, Sarah."

Sarah gazed into his eyes and suddenly knew that it was true. They were always going to be together, father and daughter. "I'm sorry I doubted you."

"God, Sarah. What's come into you all of a sudden?" He laughed.

"I just... had an epiphany. I couldn't stand how my life was heading, so I wanted to change it and shape it up. A lot." Sarah sighed. This was going to be hard to explain. "See, I met a few people here and there and they showed me some really important lessons. There's not a person in this world that is not loved by someone else. And very often you don't realize that you're loved until it's too late. You just have to learn to open your heart to people."

"Where did you learn that from?"

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

"Some people here and there." She shrugged. "And another thing. Life can't be perfect. The tragedies are just as important as the joys, and you have to accept them all. People die, and you have to move on. That doesn't mean you don't care for them. You need to remember them and grieve for them, but you can't be stuck on it forever, because death is just as important as birth."

Sarah took a deep breath and ran a hand through her hair. "My mother is gone, and there's no way I could bring her back. I have to move on. Nobody could take her place, but that doesn't mean I can't live anymore. Besides, I don't think anybody truly dies. My mother lives on forever in me. She'll be in my dreams."

__And Jareth. He'll be there, too.__

Sarah looked down at the ground, feeling the tears well up inside her eyes, and kicked at a pebble.

"Wow. What a speech." Sarah's father smiled shakily at her, disbelief evident in his face. "I believe you're right. Your mother will always take up a special place in both of our hearts."

"Yeah." She lifted her head up again, and smiled at him. She could sense the honesty in his words.

"Boy, I'm glad we had this talk. Cleared everything up, didn't we?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And, uh...somebody's here to see you." He gestured to the door.

Sarah peered outside, where the early morning sun was shining softly over the city. A blue car was parked on the gravelly dirt outside of the broken down house, and a woman wearing simple blue jeans and a sweater was leaning against the side of it.

Mom? For a second, the thought drifted into her head, but Sarah knew that was impossible. "Stepmom!"

"Sarah!" She instantly ran up to Sarah and hugged her tight. "You're safe! We found you!"

Sarah could see worry and relief mixed into her stepmother's eyes, and the tears that wouldn't stay back flowed down her cheeks. "I'm sorry, stepmother..."

"No, Sarah. Don't be. I've been so hard on you all these years, like a wicked stepmother from a fairy tale or something! But I'm going to change, Sarah."

"So am I."

"Me three."

Her father walked up to them and wrapped his loving arms around Sarah and her stepmother.

"Why don't we go home, guys? Toby's probably worried sick. And Merlin, too." He smiled at Sarah. "Hell of a day."

"No bad language, mister. Not in front of the kids." Sarah's stepmother playfully slapped him in the chest, and Sarah could see something in her eyes, something that was never there before. Or was it something that had always been there, but that she never really paid any attention to?

Love. She loves my father... and she loves me as well.

Sarah turned her face upward, looked out into the miles and miles of grayish blue sky. A lone white owl soared across the horizon, disappearing into the trees beyond.

She smiled and blew it a kiss.

EPILOGUE

Cool breeze and autumn leaves

Slow motion daylight

A lone pair of watchful eyes

Oversee the living

Feel the presence all around

A tortured soul

A wound unhealing
No regrets or promises
The past is gone
But you can still be free
If time will set you free
Time now to spread your wings
To take to flight
The life endeavor
Aim for the burning sun
You're trapped inside
But you can still be free
If time will set you free
But it's a long, long way to go
Keep moving way up high
You see the light
It shines forever
Sail through the crimson skies
The purest light
The light that sets you free
If time will set you free
Sail through the wind and rain tonight
You're free to fly tonight
And you can still be free
If time will set you free
And going higher than mountain tops
And go high the wind won't stop
And go high
Free to fly tonight
Free to fly tonight...
(Savage Garden)

FINIS. Whew! What did you think?? Remember, I live only for feedback.
If you see any mistakes, inconsistencies in the plot, whatever,
please tell me!! I wrote this in a rush...

FINISHED: April 18, 2000 11:17 PM

End
file.